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Several Latin textbooks are described and evaluated in terms of their affectiveness in teaching language mastery. These are: (1) "Using Latin," Scott, Foresman, (2) "Latin for Americans," Macmillan, (3) "Lingua Latina," by Burns, Medicus, and Sherburne, and (4) "A Basic Course in Latin," "An Intermediate Course in Latin--Reading," and "An Intermediate Course in Latin--Drills," by O'Brien and Twombley. An editor's note describes Parker's own texts "How to Speak Latin" and "Beginning Latin" as being an audiolingually oriented course with visual aids. (AF)

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LIGHT AND DARK WAVES

by

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Even though waves of anger and fear undulate in some of the dark and light corners of this state, the battle of methodology in Latin has been won by the linguists. The safest prediction that anyone could make is that it is only a matter of time before the most traditional texts, which are slowly changing, become completely linguistic. The linguists have rightly maintained that the primary goal of studying Latin should be to achieve the ability to read original works in that language, a skill which should be learned as rapidly and as thoroughly as possible.

Two delicious questions arise from this observation: How rapid is rapid; how thorough is thorough? At worst "rapid" means covering all the basic grammar in two years; at best within one year. There is even one experiment planned for next year, which will try to cover it in less than a year. At best "thorough" means "that habitual mastery of morphology and syntax"; at worst it means the simple recognition of all the forms of the language. The best type of thoroughness makes it possible to read Latin with relative rapidity, accuracy, and ease, approximating the way one reads his own native language; the worst type makes it possible to decipher Latin with varying degrees of discomfort.

What I propose to do is to examine several texts from the point of view of the rapidity and thoroughness with which they cover the fundamentals of the language, keeping in mind that the overall goal should be the ability to read original, unadapted Latin writings. Because I am aware that tradition, wedded to emotion, can often be a union til death do them part, I shall attempt to be objective and charitable. I appeal primarily to the teachers' love for their pupils, a love that prompts them to seek the best course possible, a love which demands that a methodological marriage based on inadequate and erroneous principles of language learning should be annulled.

Judged by these criteria, two very popular traditional texts leave something to be desired: USING LATIN, Scott, Foresman, and LATIN FOR AMERICANS, Macmillan. First I must say a few good things about the texts, then I shall evaluate them according to the criteria I've mentioned. On the whole the texts are comprehensive, the explanations are accurate, and the subject matter

FL 001 116

interesting. A teacher can be justifiably proud of a job quite decently done when he finishes the books. If USING LATIN is finished in toto they will have read five units of original Latin of Caesar, and a bit more if the teacher does the optional units. If LATIN FOR AMERICANS is finished in toto, not as much original Latin will be covered because the units on Caesar are, in the words of the authors, "simplified and graded forms of Caesar's GALLIC WAR" (p. viii). In the last three units there are original selections from Vergil and Ovid. At best it seems that one can finish these texts in three semesters; I have been told that the norm is nearer three and a half semesters, thus leaving so very little time for reaping the rewards of three and one half semesters of grammar.

One of the primary reasons that these texts do not fulfill the criterion for rapidity of language mastery is that they place too great an empasis on things other than the language itself, that is, Roman life, history, and mythology. Of course these subjects are important in their own right, but they have been given too much space, curtailing the study of the language itself. The most devastating evidence to substantiate this point is found in the Latin reading lessons, with which every chapter begins. On the whole it seems that the function of the reading lessons is to teach Roman life and times, rather than to exemplify the structures of the language presented in the chapter in which the reading lesson occurs. In USING LATIN, Chapter Eleven, for example, the verb "possum" is studied. In the reading lesson for that chapter (p. 75f), there are six uses of "possum" in the twenty-seven lines of the story. In Chapter Fifteen the future is presented; the reading lesson, consisting of twenty-eight lines, gives only five examples of the future. In Chapter Twenty-six the superlative is presented; three are given in a reading lesson of twenty-five lines. In Chapter Forty-nine "mille" is presented; it is used once in a story of thirty-five lines. These examples are not atypical ones, but the norm for the text. The only conclusion is that the reading lessons consume quite a bit of time, without causing mastery of new structure, thus reducing themselves primarily to exercises in vocabulary. LATIN FOR AMERICANS does give more examples of structure in the reading lessons, but these are still far too few, compared to the texts I shall mention shortly. Thus rapidity in language mastery cannot be achieved when a text is bogged down by too much subject matter and by too great an emphasis on etymology.

The kinds of exercises in these texts will at best make it possible for the student to recognize all the basic forms, thus insuring only varying degrees of facility in decoding. Even though tapes accompany the texts, they are more in the nature of appendages, rather than integral supplements to the texts themselves.

Finally the publishers of these texts are primarily interested in producing a book that will sell, rather than in improving the teaching of Latin. It is very disturbing to find that the difference between the 1961 and 1948 editions of USING LATIN is very slight.

A new text which tackles the problem of thoroughness though not of rapidity is LINGUA LATINA, LIBER PRIMUS & LIBER ALTER, by Mary Ann T. Burns, Carl J. Medicus, and Richard Sherburne, Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Company, 1964, (vol. I, 502 pages), 1965, (vol. II, 400 pages). I call this a hybrid text because, in the words of its authors, "it combines the basic methods of applied linguistics with the useful elements of traditional methodology" (p. v). The

authors attempt to achieve this goal by emphasizing structure in their reading lessons, employing legitimate patterns based on adaptations of classical and medieval Latin rather than translating English, they also include massive pattern practices, accompanied by tapes which are integrally related to the text. Thus they make the attempt to create habitual mastery of morphology and syntax. Volume One, consisting of twenty-four lessons, goes up to the subjunctive. The first half of Volume Two presents the subjunctive completely, in addition to the remaining forms. The second half of Volume Two consists of original, unadapted passages mostly from Caesar, with one chapter on the AENEID, and a final chapter of several poems "De Vita." The format for each lesson, excluding Part Two of Volume Two is as follows:

I. Fabula--Latin reading lesson

It's purpose is completely clear: to demonstrate the forms, syntax, and vocabulary to be learned in that chapter. Throughout Volume One English translations of the Fabula are presented side by side with the Latin, since the emphasis is on structure rather than deciphering.

II. Grammatica

These short explanations emphasize descriptive rather than analytic grammar, indicating how the language works rather than why. If one's goal is reading Latin, he does not need to know so many of the explanations of the traditional grammarians: e.g., the difference between "cum" causal, concessive, and circumstantial.

III. Exercitia

These are oral drills, usually involving a recognition then production of the new material presented. In successive drills the authors carefully contrast old material with the new. All the answers are given. For any given form, there is an average of approximately forty examples. The examples are so numerous that it would seem difficult not to master the forms given.

IV. Conversio

English to Latin sentences for translation.

V. Narratio

A Latin reading lesson without accompanying English translation. Latin questions about the content of the lesson are asked.

VI. Epitoma

A brief review of grammar.

VII. Index verborum

Several innovations are worthy of note:

> Only the third person of the verb is presented throughout the first half of volume one. This makes it possible to present all the conjugations together, as well as active and passive forms. The perfect tense is presented first. In Volume II the tenses of the subjunctive are presented in this order: imperfect, past perfect, present, perfect. The nominative and accusative cases are given first, in declensions 1, 2, and 3. Next comes the ablative, then the genitive, and finally the dative by Chapter 9. This kind of control makes the horizontal approach easier.

This text does no more than USING LATIN or LATIN FOR AMERICANS, but does it twice as well! In spite of this, however, there are some negative facets of the text. Perhaps the most important is one which seems to be inherent in the linguistic method itself: B o r e d o m manifesting itself in a lack of the feeling of challenge or progress on the part of the learner, and in the fatigue of pattern practices. Even though there is good reason for giving the English translation along with the Latin reading (Fabula), the learner often feels that he has nothing to do, that he is indeed doing nothing. Even though it is more efficient to give the answers to the drill material, the learner often feels that he has simply been asked to become a parrot. Even though the Conversio and the Narratio require the student to do more than memorize answers already given, the heart of each chapter consisting of the Fabula and the Exercitia are too long and are almost totally lacking in variety.

In spite of these objections, however, a good teacher can do a fine job with LINGUA LATINA. It is a sound text, and, as a hybrid, a very sensible compromise, until the linguistic reformation is complete.

The series which attempts to combine rapidity and thoroughness in achieving the goal of reading original Latin is that written by Richard J. O'Brien, and Neil J. Twombley, A BASIC COURSE IN LATIN, AN INTERMEDIATE COURSE IN LATIN-READING, AN INTERMEDIATE COURSE IN LATIN--DRILLS, all published by Loyola University Press. This series consists of a beginning text, an intermediate text of readings about the history of Rome, and a book of drills based on the readings of the preceding text. There is also an optional book, THE MEN ON THE TIBER, which is a translation of the intermediate readings. The goal which the authors envision is sublime: "To acquire that habitual mastery of Latin morphology and syntax which is a necessary prerequisite to the acquisition of the ability to read Latin literature rapidly, accurately, and with ease." (AN INTERMEDIATE COURSE IN LATIN--READINGS, p. vii)

Thus from the very first day of class these rhapsodic Jesuits begin to prepare the student for that kind of language control which will eventually make it possible for him to do something which many of us college teachers cannot do: to pick up any Latin text and begin reading it, varying the speed of reading with the nature of the subject being read, pausing occasionally to look up a word here and there. Their texts represent a major break-through in terms of a sound program after the fundamentals have been learned. The course takes three years to complete, one and a half for the basic course, and one and half for the intermediate.

O'Brien and Twombley feel that they can accomplish their goal by a total emphasis on the language: gone are tidbits on Roman life and mythology, gone are etymologies, gone are analytic analyses of grammar. They consider that there are two stages in language learning: conscious control and automatic control. Conscious control is that stage in which one can recognize and produce the forms of the language, with concentration on what he is performing, like a beginning driver who can handle the car but must consciously perform each necessary movement. Mastery of this first stage is achieved by reading lessons and pattern practices, which concentrate on a single point of structure at a time. The drills represent a massive exposure to the language. In one class period, according to Dr. Twombly, he got through approximately 1300 drill sentences.

To achieve automatic control of the language, that stage in which one manipulates the forms of the language without thinking about it, like the experienced driver who performs the necessary movements unreflectingly, structure questions (Quaesita), and structure drills (Exercitationes) are used. The Quaesita are Latin questions about the reading lesson. There are five questions for every two lines of text. These exercises appear only in the last two sections of A BASIC COURSE, but form an entire volume themselves in the intermediate course. The purposes of the Quaesita are:

a. to test the comprehension of the reading lesson without recourse to English translation;
b. "to force systematically the recognition and production of as much of the Latin morphology and structure as possible." (p. vii);
c. to teach the text--gender of nours, principal parts of verbs, and idioms;
c. to teach synonyms and antonyms.

The Exercitationes are designed "to provide for and insure the automatic and habitual mastery and control of precisely those morphological and syntactic language patterns which are a problem for a native speaker of English." (p. X). Because the goal is automatic control, the exercises deliberately "distract the student's attention to some other point in the drill sentence," in their attempt "to help the student reduce to a new linguistic habit the operation which he could previously perform only by deliberate choice." (p. xi). Unfortunately space does not permit examples of these exercies. They are billiant and exacting. Even though I have been speaking Latin for thirteen years, I stumbled often when Dr. Twombley drilled me. I am convinced that the exercises will make automatic control possible.

Of the three texts, the last two are the soundest. It would be purposeless to discuss the defects of the first basic text, for Dr. O'Brien is quite aware of them and is in the process of collecting suggestions from the users of the text. These suggestions will be incorporated in the revision which he plans in the near future. Perhaps the chief objection to this series is that in spite of their consummate theory of language learning, O'Brien and Twombly forget that the learner is more than an animal to be conditioned.

What is really needed is a text which combines the best theory of language learning with the greatest awareness of the psychology of the learner. Until that time comes, I suppose that the undulations of the waves of anger and fear will register noticeably on the charts, throughout the dark and light corners of Iowa and the United States as a whole.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Professor Parker modestly refrains from mentioning his own textbook which is soon to be published. Herewith is an excerpt from a memorandum issued by Mr. Robert J. Brett, District Chairman for Foreign Languages, Richfield:"One of the first-year courses under serious consideration for use in Richfield secondary schools is an audio-lingual oriented course with visual aids now being written by Mr. Henry Parker of the State College of Iowa (Cedar Falls). Mr. Parker's course makes extensive use of the dialogue approach to learning Latin, with grammar drilled through pattern practice. Visual aids are used in this course to make the study easier, more interesting, and more lasting. Adding the visual dimension is becoming increasingly common in the audio-lingual approach; films, film-strips, transparencies, and pictures are excellent cues, and can be used in a variety of ways for instruction, drill, and recall.

Mr. Parker's course is being written with the aid of a number of classroom teachers of Latin who test his materials for him. As yet unpublished, it contains films, filmstrips, recordings, and textbooks, called How To Speak Latin and Beginning Latin. It is intended to be a complete first-year course with sufficient vocabulary and structure work to allow its articulation with virtually any second-year text. Sample lessons already received promise an interesting, well-developed approach to teaching Latin. Mr. Parker has asked that the Richfield secondary schools use his materials next year in trial groups, and the Latin teachers are most interested in trying out these challenging materials. The trial could be made in all first-year Latin classes next year or only in selected groups with control groups using a more traditional approach. Trial and control groups could be used in the junior high schools and the senior high school, as well. There would be a charge of $200 to $300.00 for the materials provided. (Mr. Parker is working with the aid of a small grant.)

Permission to use these materials next year would not result in a postponement of text selection for Latin II, III, and IV for two reasons: Mr. Parker's program of studies will not include second-year materials for several years, and the Parker first-year materials are specifically designed to be complete in themselves and to lead easily into the use of any of the second-year texts now being published. Text selection for the more advanced levels of Latin, then, could continue, and the only necessary postponement would be of a decision about the text for Latin I." * * * * * *

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